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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0362
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN PRIORITY 0779
RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN PRIORITY 9393
RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE PRIORITY 3053
RUEHNP/AMCONSUL NAPLES PRIORITY 3203
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0042
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 000657

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/PPD JEAN DUGGAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/22/2018

TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [SOCI](#) [CU](#) [IT](#)

SUBJECT: ITALY/CUBA: ACTIVITIES FOR THE DAY SOLIDARITY WITH
THE CUBAN PEOPLE

REF: A. SECSTATE 45792

[B.](#) SECSTATE 46997

[C.](#) SECSTATE 51536

[D.](#) ROME 579

Classified By: A/Pol M/C Jonathan R. Cohen, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1.](#) (C) Summary: Per ref A-C requests, Post engaged in a robust effort to mark May 21's "Day of Solidarity with the Cuban People." We placed the Cuba Solidarity op-ed May 20 in leading center-right daily Il Giornale. Lobbying by the Ambassador convinced Senate President Schifani, Chamber of Deputies President Fini, and FM Frattini to make public statements on May 21 voicing their solidarity with the Cuban people and hopes for a free, democratic Cuba. The GOI statements prompted criticism from the Italian Communist Party. End Summary.

[2.](#) (SBU) To mark the "Day of Solidarity with the Cuban People," post placed the Department-drafted op-ed on Cuba Solidarity Day in leading center-right daily Il Giornale on May 20.

[3.](#) (C) In meetings with Chamber of Deputies President Gianfranco Fini and FM Franco Frattini (see also ref D), Ambassador raised our plans for Cuba Solidarity Day and asked for their support, to which both responded positively. The Ambassador followed up with letters to Fini and Senate President Renato Schifani, and poloffs worked with staffers to coordinate public statements on May 21. All three statements were immediately available in prominent locations on the MFA, Senate and Chamber web sites.

[4.](#) (U) Frattini said recent signs of openness in Cuba have been "too tentative," and that Italy hoped they would "rapidly be strengthened, beginning with some concrete gestures on behalf of political prisoners." Schifani and Fini both called on Cuba to continue reforms and to protect civil, political, and economic rights, as well as fundamental liberties, in conformity with Cuba's international obligations.

[5.](#) (U) Reflecting the changing Italian political landscape exemplified by the recent election of PM Berlusconi, the lone critical response to the GOI's statements came from the Italian Communist Party (PdCI). Calling the statements "nonsense," Iacopo Venier, responsible for PdCI foreign policy coordination, said Cuba Solidarity Day was a "phantom" observance cooked up by the United States in a "vain attempt to destabilize (Cuba's) socialist nature." He went on to say

that true solidarity with Cuba had been shown by "those who have always defended it against terrorist aggression, an illegal and criminal blockade, and from attempts to turn it back into a colony."

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